

Message Text

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15

ACTION EA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8646

AMEMBASSY BERN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 4254

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINR

SUBJECT: NEW ROK AMBASSADOR TO SWITZERLAND

1. DR. LEE TONG-WON LEFT SEOUL JULY 2 FOR BERN TO PRESENT HIS CREDENTIALS AS NEW ROK AMBASSADOR TO SWITZERLAND. LEE IS ACCOMPANIED BY HIS WIFE AND TWO CHILDREN. THE LEES BOTH ARE AMERICAN EDUCATED AND SPEAK GOOD ENGLISH.

2. LEE WAS BORN AUGUST 2, 1925 IN SOUTH HAMKYONG PROVINCE, NORTH KOREA. HE GRADUATED FROM YONSET UNIVERSITY IN SEOUL AND RECEIVED MASTERS DEGREE FROM KENT STATE IN 1952, FOLLOWED BY A PH.D. IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS FROM OXFORD IN 1958.

3. FOLLOWING THE MILITARY COUP, LEE BECAME ONE OF THE FIRST INTELLECTUALS TO OFFER HIS SERVICES TO THE PARK REGIME AND WAS APPOINTED CHIEF SECRETARY TO PARK IN 1962. IN 1963 HE WAS ASSIGNED AS ROK AMBASSADOR TO THAILAND AND IN 1964, STILL NOT YET 40 YEARS OLD, HE BECAME MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS. IN HIS EIGHTEEN MONTHS AS FOREIGN MINISTER, LEE PERFORMED BRILLIANTLY. HE PLAYED A KEY ROLE IN NEGOTIATION OF THE ROK--JAPAN NORMALIZATION TREATY, CREATED ASPAC, AND CONCLUDED THE US-ROK STATUS OF FORCES AGREEMENT.

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4. IN 1967 LEE BECAME A MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AS A MEMBER OF THE RULLING DEMOCRATIC REPUBLICAN PARTY. FOLLOWING THE ELECTION OF 1971 HE BECAME CHAIRMAN OF THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. HE DID NOT RUN FOR AN ASSEMBLY SEAT IN THE 1973 ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS.

5. LEE IS HIGHLY INTELLIGENT, ENERGETIC AND EGO-TISTICAL. HE HAS BEEN ONE OF PRESIDENT PARK'S MAJOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS ADVISORS, ALTHOUGH OF LATE HIS INFLUENCE DECLINED. HIS ASSIGNMENT TO BERN, WHICH IN KOREAN TERMS, IS NOT UP TO THE STANDARD OF HIS PREVIOUS POSTS, IS A SIGN OF HIS FALL FROM FAVOR, BUT WE EXPECT THAT THIS MAY BE

TEMPORARY. LEE HAS MAINTAINED VERY CLOSE TIES WITH US AND WHILE IN BERN HOPES TO ESTABLISH CLOSE WORKING RELATIONS WITH EMBASSY BERN.

6. LEE IS A LONG TIME PERSONAL FRIEND OF MINE. I BELIEVE HE WILL BE A USEFUL AND INTERTAINING COLLEAGUE.
HABIB

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